

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JERUSA 00886 161522Z

46

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 NIC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-15 IO-13 OMB-01 RSR-01 /097 W

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R 161449Z AUG 73

FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4393

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 886

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PBOR, JO, IS

SUBJECT: CONFISCATION OF LAND IN BETHLEHEM AREA

REF: JERUSALEM A001, A-081, A-087

1. ACCORDING TO AUGUST 15 EDITION OF JERUSALEM ARABIC DAILY EL QUDS, ISRAELI MILITARY AUTHORITIES ON AUGUST 13 CONFISCATED 400 DUNUMS OF LAND (MAINLY VINEYARDS) FROM FARMERS OF EL KHADER VILLAGE. AREA IS LOCATED PARALLEL TO AND WEST OF BETHLEHEM-HEBRON ROAD AT KILOMETER 17 NEAR EIN RAS OF WADI EL BYAR. VILLAGERS REPORTEDLY WARNED BY AUTHORITIES DAY BEFORE CONFISCATION. AUTHORITIES WILL ALLOW THE 30 FAMILIES INVOLVED TO WORK LAND UNTIL OCTOBER HARVEST. AUTHORITIES REPORTEDLY OFFERED VILLAGERS IL 4 FOR EACH VINE ON LAND. FARMERS DELEGATION MET WITH MAYOR OF BETHLEHEM WHO RAISED QUESTION WITH MILITARY GOVERNOR OF BETHLEHEM DISTRICT. MILITARY GOVERNOR TOLD MAYOR ACCORDING TO GOVERNOR'S MAP 350 DUNUMS CONFISCATED, NOT 400.

2. JERUSALEM POST CARRIED SIMILAR REPORT AUGUST 16, ADDING THAT MILITARY AUTHORITIES INFORMED MAYOR WITHOUT FURTHER ELABORATION THAT LAND CLOSED OFF FOR "MILITARY PURPOSES."

3. CONGEN OFFICER TOURED CONFISCATED AREA WITH BETHLEHEM MAYOR
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PAGE 02 JERUSA 00886 161522Z

FREIJ, WHO CLAIMED THIS FOURTH CONFISCATION IN AREA SINCE 1967.

MAYOR ALLEGES ISRAELI AUTHORITIES DESIRE ISOLATE BETHLEHEM AND EVENTUALLY INCORPORATE IT INTO JERUSALEM. HE CITED 1967 CONFISCATION OF 500-METER-ONG AREA ADJOINING BETHLEHEM TO NORTH; CONFISCATION FROM BEIT JALA WEST OF BETHLEHEM OF APPROXIMATELY 4,000 DUNUMS WHICH WAS INCLUDED WITHIN JERUSALEM'S NEW BOUNDARIES IN 1967; 7,000 DUNUMS CONFISCATED EAST OF BETHLEHEM IN AREA KNOWN AS SHEPHERS FIELD IN 1972; AND MOST RECENT ARTAS (REFAIRGRAM) AND KHADER CONFISCATIONS SOUTH OF BETHLEHEM. MAYOR ACCUSED ISRAELI MILITARY AUTHORITIES OF DELIBERATE PSYCHOLOGICAL CAMPAIGN TO DISCOURAGE CONTINUED CULTIVATION OF LAND ADJACENT TO THAT WHICH CONFISCATED, BY INTIMIDATING LANDOWNERS TO SELL THEIR LANDS BEFORE CONFISCATION, MAYOR CLAIMS LAND RECORDS DATING BACK TO MANDATE PERIOD SHOW LAND BELONGED TO ARABS BEFORE 1928.

4. LATEST ISRAELI MOVE, COMING IN WAKE OF OTHER LAND SEIZURES IN THE AREA, HAS CAUSED CONSIDERABLE ALARM AND OUTRAGE IN BETHLEHEM. THERE IS GNERAL ASSUMPTION, DESPITE LACONIC ISRAELI EXPLANATION FOR THESE CLOSURES, THAT LAND IS TO BE USED FOR CIVILIAN SETTLEMENT, PERHAPS, IN LAST TWO INSTANCES, FOR EXPANSION OF NEARBY GUSH ETZION. EVERYONE REMEMBERS THAT KIRYAT ARBA LAND WAS FIRST TAKE "FOR MILITARY PURPOSES." CONCERN NOW EXTENDS TO FATE OF BETHLEHEM ITSELF, NOW SURROUNDED BY CLOSED LAND (KNOWLEDGEABLE HAARETZ REPORTER LITANI TOLD US RECENTLY THAT ISRAELI WOULD EVENTUALLY TAKE BETHLEHEM SINCE IT LIES BETWEEN JERUSALEM AND SENSITIVE GUSH ETZION AREA).
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